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Editor's Column

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Editor's Column

Financial aid administrators, perhaps more so than other professionals in postsecondary education, are confronted with vast amounts of data every day. These data come from a multitude of sources: the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, parent phone calls, meetings with students, U.S. Department of Education rules, federal legislation, notes from colleagues, periodicals, list serves, Institutional Student Information Records, and more. Financial aid administrators are asked to interpret these data, synthesize them, and convert them into information that can be stored, shared, and acted upon.

Established over 40 years ago, the *Journal of Student Financial Aid* is a vehicle for converting financial aid data into usable information for financial aid practitioners. We do this by disseminating original research on critical issues germane to financial aid administration. Aid administrators have been the *JSEFA*'s primary audience since its inception. Nonetheless, we face challenges to this mission. Research, which can take several months to publish, may be less timely and less relevant to practitioners than we would like. This reality is not unique to this *JSEFA*, but is endemic to the peer review and publication process to ensure a high quality resource. Lag times between the conduct of research and its dissemination may blunt the impact of good work for practitioners. Moreover, it can discourage authors who face tenure clocks or wish to see their works published in a timely manner from submitting articles.

Beginning with this issue, the *JSEFA* moves into the digital world of storing and disseminating information with the goal of making research more readily available to our primary audience. Our vehicle for this is an online research repository and publication system used by hundreds of other journals around the world. As a reader of *JSEFA* you can expect the following benefits. First, you can get journal content delivered to your news feed or e-mail, including abstracts and major conclusions from the research. Our hope is to make it simpler for you the practitioner to skim content, but have the opportunity to delve more deeply into articles of particular interest. Second, all articles published since the inception of the Journal will be made available via a digital repository that is indexed and searchable. Financial aid practitioners and scholars will have quick and systematic access to the rich base of literature developed in *JSEFA* over its long history. For example, no other journal has published as many articles related to student loans as *JSEFA* over the past 15 years. Now, all of these articles will be readily accessed. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our new publication system will help us shorten review times and move research to publication faster. Our goal is to get timely, practitioner-relevant research into the hands of financial aid administrators faster.

All of this represents one of the most significant changes in the production of the *JSEFA* since its inception. It is a change that we feel will benefit NASFAA members and improve the *JSEFA*. Already, this journal has a

strong history as an outlet for scholarly work in the field of higher education studies. A citation analysis done by Budd and Magnuson in 2010 listed *JSEA* as the 20th most cited journal in the field. Our intent is to enhance the *Journal of Student Financial Aid's* reputation among practitioners while making it among the most cited in the field.

Jacob Gross
Editor